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UPON THE

PRESENT STATE

OF THE

WOOL TRADE.

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AND THE

Laws made concerning that Article,

How far the same are consistent with true Policy,

and the real Interest of the Nation.

BRITISH MUSEUM

By A GENTLEMAN.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR P. ELMSLY, IN THE STRAND.

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By a GENTLEMAN,

Reſident on his Eſtate in Lincolnshire.

LONDON:

Printed for P. ELMSLY, in the Strand.

M.DCC.LXXXI.

W. Musgrave.

CONSIDERATIONS

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PRESENT STATE

OF THE

WOOL TRADE, &c.

THE great fall in the price of long combing wool, and the little demand for the ſame at market; by which means there is an accumulated quantity in the hands of the grower, without any immediate probable vent thereof; naturally calls upon the landed intereſt to make inquiry into the fact, the probable cauſes thereof, and the beſt means of redreſſing an evil ſo diſtreſſing to the grower of wool, and, in its conſequences, tending ſo manifeſtly to the damage and decay of the woollen manufacture.

The

The reſult of an inquiry made in two or three counties, has fully eſtabliſhed the fact regarding the preſent low price of wool; by which it appears, that long combing wool, in the county of Lincoln, has fallen in price full one half, from what it has borne, upon an average, for theſe laſt fifty years.

It likewiſe appears from inconteſtible evidence, that there is in the ſaid county of Lincoln a conſiderable quantity of wool in the hands of the grower, for which he has no market, and conſequently, that quantity is accumulating.

The immediate cauſes of this failure in the demand for this article, ſeems to ariſe from the diminiſhed ſale in the goods particularly made from long wool, and the increaſe of that commodity, from the great number of incloſures which have taken place all over the kingdom; by which means, the lands being brought into a higher ſtate of cultivation, the breed of ſheep is improved, and the quantity and quality of wool increaſed: Thus, there is an augmentation of the raw ma-

terial, at a time when there is a diminution in the ſale of the manufacture; both which co-operating, will ſufficiently account for the accumulated quantity in the hands of the grower, and the little probability of any vent for the ſame, at the preſent confined market.

The cauſe of the diminution in the ſale of manufactures made from long wool, does not ſeem to ariſe ſo much from the preſent ſituation of public affairs, as from an alteration in the faſhion and dreſſes of the people, by which linen and cotton are introduced almoſt univerſally, among thoſe ranks of people who formerly wore the ſtuffs and worſteds made from long wool. This being the caſe, it will neceſſarily follow, that the graziers muſt either ceaſe to grow wool, or a market muſt be found for the ſame.

Wool is eminently the foundation of the Engliſh trade and riches, it is therefore to little purpoſe to encourage the woollen manufacture, if the growth of wool be diſcouraged: The caſe of the

wool-growers is the caſe of all the free-holders and land-owners in Great Britain.

It has been ſaid, that the grazier ſhould change the culture of his lands, and, if the market is overſtocked with long wool, ſhould turn his land into tillage, and once more ſupply the foreign markets with corn, as in former times, to the emolument of the farmer, and the advantage of the ſtate. True it is, there was a time when this iſland was a kind of granary for Europe, and ſupplied great part thereof with corn; but, alas! that trade is gone; not from any fault in the farmer, in having laid down too great a proportion of land, and converted it to grazing from tillage; but from the ſuperior wiſdom of foreign nations, who, ſeeing the neceſſity, have adopted the policy of giving encouragement to agriculture, and have thereby ſupplied themſelves with corn more than equal to their own conſumption: ſo that there is no encouragement for the grazier to convert his land into tillage, if it was to be accompliſhed

compliſhed ſo eaſily as ſome may imagine.

The late prices of corn, which always bear a due proportion with the quantity produced, will ſufficiently ſhew the preſent ſtate of that commodity in Europe; for when, from the late low price of wheat, the ports were open for exportation, the farmer ready to ſell, and the merchant ready to carry, no market could be found for the ſame.

Few people are unacquainted with the prejudice which was formerly entertained with regard to the exportation of corn; experience has fully verified the wiſdom and policy of that meaſure, which has enſured due emolument to the farmer, and plenty to the nation.

Some means might poſſibly be deviſed for opening and ſecuring a foreign market for corn; but ſuch muſt take effect when peace ſhall be once more eſtabliſhed, and miniſters ſhall ſhew more attention to cultivate amity and trade with foreign nations, by treaties, than ſeems the faſhion of the preſent day; and

ſhall have wiſdom to adviſe, and reſolution to purſue meaſures beneficial to the ſtate, though in oppoſition to vulgar prejudices.

Such being the facts, with regard to the preſent low price of wool, and the accumulated quantity in the hand of the grower, without any market for the ſame; and ſuch being the apparent cauſes thereof; the only remedy which appears, for redreſſing the evil of the preſent day, ſeems to be, a temporary ſuſpenſion of the laws prohibiting the exportation of wool, under ſuch regulations and reſtrictions as may make it leaſt prejudicial to the manufacturer.

Againſt the expediency of ſuch a meaſure, ſtands the prejudice which moſt people entertain in favour of laws of long eſtabliſhment, and under which, or rather, as it ſhould ſeem, in concurrence with which, the woollen manufacture is ſuppoſed to have greatly flouriſhed; and the policy of ſuch laws, compared with the practice of other countries, who are preſumed to have adopted a ſimilar policy,

where opportunity offered, by prohibiting the exportation of a raw material, in favour of a manufacture at home; by which it was, and has been conceived, that by ſuch prohibition of the raw material, a monopoly might be obtained in each ſtate, for their particular manufacture at foreign markets.

It may be neceſſary to examine each of the above heads ſeparately. The prejudice eſtabliſhed in favour of ancient laws, it is preſumed, is greatly ſtrengthened by habit of thinking; as what the mind has once conceived, and ideally digeſted, is with great difficulty removed: but if any one would give themſelves the trouble to peruſe ſome of the ancient laws concerning trade, he would find much to blame, and little to commend, as they almoſt all proceed upon the principle of a monopoly on one hand, and a revenue to the Prince on the other.

The laws concerning wool, and the woollen manufacture, are numerous: but there will be no need to advert to any

but ſuch as ſeem to have an immediate connection with the preſent ſubject.

The firſt ſtatute which occurs of the prohibitory kind, concerning this article,
11 Ed. 3. is early in the reign of Ed. III; and from that æra has been dated by many the origin of our woollen manufacture; but this does not appear to be the fact, as wool was certainly wrought into cloth in England prior to that time, though not equal to the home conſumption; ſo that ſuch ſtatute was made, as it ſhould ſeem, rather for the encouragement of the home manufacture. Some years after, was enacted
27 Ed. 3. a ſtatute, declaring it felony for Engliſh merchants to tranſport wool: but this ſtatute laid no reſtraint upon foreigners, but was rather an encouragement for them to come into the kingdom, and buy wool with other commodities; nor did this ſtatute lay any reſtraint upon the King, who received a conſiderable revenue from the licences which he granted for the exportation of wool.

31 Ed. 3. Some few years after, a ſtatute was made, permitting all merchants to export wool

wool to places in amity with the King, from the 1ſt of May to Michaelmas, paying for each ſack 50s.: here was a partial favour granted to the manufacturer, by the reſtraint on the grower, as to the times allowed for exportation, and a duty reſerved to the King.

In the ſame reign paſſed another ſtatute, laying farther reſtraints upon the Engliſh merchant in exporting wool, the felony of a former ſtatute repealed, and a forfeiture of goods in the room thereof: great diſtinction appears, in all theſe ancient laws, between the denizen and the foreigner. 38 Ed. 3.

During this time, particular places were appointed, to which wool ſhould be carried for exportation; and this, with the profeſſed view of better collecting the duties payable and ariſing therefrom.

In the reign of Ric. II. a ſtatute was made, obliging all merchants ſtrangers, who ſhould bring commodities of any kind into England, to lay out half the value of their ſaid merchandize in other commodities of the land therein ſpecified, 14 R. 2.

ſuch

ſuch as wool, &c. This was very far from a prohibition.

2 H. 5. In the reign of H. V. paſſed a ſtatute obliging all merchant ſtrangers who ſhould buy wool in England, and ſhould not come to the ſtaple, to bring to the maſter of the mint of the Tower of London, for every ſack of wool, one ounce of gold bullion.

8 H. 6. In the reign of H. VI. paſſed a ſtatute forbidding the exportation of thrums of woollen yarn, for fear of defrauding the King of his cuſtoms and ſubſidies, which ought to ariſe from the ſame, if they were fully wrought within the realm, or elſe, if not wrought, but in wools, brought to the ſtaple. This proves, that both wool in its raw ſtate, and in the manufacture, paid a duty; and proves the policy of thoſe times with regard to trade.

14 H. 6. By another ſtatute in the ſame reign, wools are prohibited from being exported to any place but Calais, with ſpecial exceptions in favour of the King and his council, and the merchants of Venice, &c. This was only another reſtraint upon

upon the trade of wool, prejudicial to the grower.

In the preamble of another ſtatute in that reign, it is recited, that the ſubſidy of wools, in each year of Edw. III. amounted to £. 68,000 and more, (no ſmall revenue for thoſe times) but at this time ſuch ſubſidy did not exceed £. 12,000. 27 H. 6.

By a ſtatute in the reign of H. VIII. a reſtraint is laid upon perſons buying wool in certain counties, and upon ſtrangers until after the Purification of our Lady next after the ſhearing thereof. All this time exportation of wool is permitted, only under different reſtraints. 22 H. 8.

By another ſtatute of the ſame reign, a monopoly is granted to the merchants of the ſtaple. 37 H. 8.

A ſubſidy upon wool during all the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when the woollen manufacture ſeems to have been in a very flouriſhing ſtate, and the exports thereof conſiderable.

A ſubſidy of 3*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* by ſtrangers, and 33*s.* 4*d.* a ſack upon wool by denizens, granted by this ſtatute. 1 Ed. 6.

A ſubſidy

1 Ja. 1. A ſubſidy of 3*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* a ſack during all the reign of Ja. I. and great part of the reign of Car. I.

12 C. 2. By a ſtatute in the early part of the reign of Car. II. wool was prohibited being exported, under the penalty of felony.

From this ſhort hiſtory of the ſubject, taken from the ſtatutes, there appears to have been a conſtant exportation of wool to the time of the Reſtoration; and it appears further, that in peaceable times, under every wiſe adminiſtration during that period, trade and commerce flouriſhed, to a degree proportionate to the times, equal to what it has done ſince, and particularly the woollen manufacture, which aroſe during the time that exportation of wool was allowed, and in ſome of thoſe periods flouriſhed greatly, and the exports thereof were conſiderable; which may plainly ſhew there was no neceſſity to prohibit the exportation of wool, for the encouragement of the woollen manufacture.

Soon after the reſtoration of Car. II. the decay of trade and manufactures was viſible, and eaſily to be accounted for, from the

the confuſion of the preceding times; but the cunning of the manufacturer, deſirous of obtaining a monopoly of the raw material; and the policy of the government, not chuſing to advert to times paſt, and the true cauſe, concurred in fixing the attention upon the exportation of wool, as the cauſe of the decay of the woollen manufacture. The flouriſhing ſtate of the manufacture ſoon after that period, has induced many to think it entirely owing to the ſaid prohibitory law, without conſidering, that the reſtoration of peace and harmony would of itſelf cauſe trade and commerce to thrive; and had there been no prohibition, the effect would have been the ſame: for, during the times of the preceding anarchy and confuſion, ſobriety and order were much inculcated into the lower ranks of people; and that enthuſiaſm, which had contributed to overthrow one government, and ſeemed ſo ill adapted for ſupporting another, was not ill ſuited for induſtry and trade; ſince future times have ſhewn us, that the like ſpirit prevails much amongſt the manufacturers

of the preſent day. And nothing is more certain, than that when the manufacture flouriſhes, the prohibitory laws are nugatory; ſince, as long as the manufacturer can work up the quantity produced, ſo long will he be enabled to give a fair price for the raw material: and that alone would ſufficiently prevent any exportation of the ſame, without any laws of prohibition or reſtraint.—From the above expoſition of facts, ſmall credit will ſeem to be due to the policy of former times, from the laws enacted by our anceſtors concerning trade; when a monopoly on one hand, and a revenue on the other, ſeem the ruling principle throughout.

It has been ſaid, that the laws for prohibiting the exportation of a raw material are conſonant to the policy of all nations, upon this principle, that by ſuch prohibition a monopoly may be obtained for the manufacture in foreign parts; and the kingdom of Sardinia has been brought as a precedent on this head. I believe it will be found upon inquiry, that England is ſingular in this policy; if ſo, there may be room

room to doubt the wiſdom of the meaſure. The kingdom of Sardinia has been peculiarly fortunate in a ſucceſſion of three wiſe monarchs, and therefore from thence may be ſuppoſed an example worthy imitation: that country, with few reſources, makes the moſt of what it has, and thereby may afford a pattern to other nations, who, tho' they may have greater reſources, yet, their demands being proportionably greater, require more care in the cultivation and improvement of ſuch reſources. It appears, then, upon inquiry, that Sardinia is in poſſeſſion of the article of raw ſilk, from which a valuable manufactory was eſtabliſhed in that country; in proceſs of time, other countries being deſirous of raiſing a manufacture of the like ſort, the wiſe monarch of that day made a law prohibiting the exportation of the ſaid raw material, conceiving that thereby he ſhould be able to preſerve a monopoly of the ſaid manufacture to his own country; but when he found that ſuch material was to be got elſewhere, he immediately opened his ports for the exportation

thereof, with a due preference to his own country; by which he enſured to the manufacturers a certainty of their own home trade, an advantage at foreign markets, and a conſiderable emolument to his government from ſuch exportation. Here ſhould ſeem a precedent, the reſult of true wiſdom and ſound policy, well worthy our moſt attentive conſideration.

It is an indiſputable fact, that no manufacture can be beneficial to any ſtate, which ſtands in need of a monopoly of the produce of the land of any part of that ſtate for its ſupport. The woollen manufacture in England neither does, nor ever did ſtand in ſuch need: it is a falſe ground, to ſtate the flouriſhing condition of that manufacture to the prohibitory laws with regard to the exportation of wool. Whenever the trade is flouriſhing, the manufacturer is able to give an adequate price for his material, and then the prohibitory law becomes nugatory; ſince, when there is a market at home

for

for a commodity, there is no fear of a foreign market being ſought for.*

The greateſt encouragement to the exportation of wool, even ſuppoſing the ſame was detrimental to the manufacturer, is the very low price thereof; which encourages and enables the illicit trader to run the hazard, as the low price in the purchaſe, and the high price in the ſale, will always give vigour to an illicit trade; and therefore it is that a fair and adequate price for wool is moſt advantageous to the manufacturer, as enſuring to him a certainty of a ſufficient ſupply of that material, and a diſcouragement to the illicit trader, by whom our rivals in trade are ſupplied, at a much cheaper rate than they would be by an exporta-

* This appears particularly to have been the caſe, by an account publiſhed by a Mr. Wheeler, *temp. Eliz.* who ſays, "That ſo early as the time of Phi-"lip and Mary, the Cloth trade was grown to be "very great in England, inſomuch, that the trade "of exporting Wool was almoſt wholly decayed." This ſhews a far better method of checking the exportation of Wool, than prohibiting it abſolutely by penal laws.

tion allowed, under due regulations and reſtrictions: and it is much to be doubted, whether any more wool would go out of the kingdom under an exportation limited and allowed, and conſequently beneficial to the ſtate, than what now goes clandeſtinely, to the injury of all fair trade, detrimental to government, and no benefit to the grower. The real intereſt of the manufacturer and wool-grower can be but one, ſince the flouriſhing ſtate of one muſt always be beneficial to the other.

Wool is now in general circulation, as an article of trade, all over Europe; and this is the only country which attempts to retain all ſuch material within itſelf. The woollen manufacture of England requires Spaniſh wool for making the ſuperfine cloths; and yet, with the additional charge of importation of the raw material, our workmen can rival all nations at foreign markets. Whilſt the government allows ſuch importation for the benefit of the manufacturer, it denies the grower of wool the liberty of ſending abroad

abroad what the manufacturer cannot uſe at home. Under this allowed importation of Spaniſh wool, other ſorts might be ſuppoſed to be fraudulently imported, to the further injury of the grower; but the price of that article in the different countries ſufficiently defeats the idea of ſuch fraud: The ſame reaſon would operate, in like manner, if the ports were open for the exportation of wool: whilſt the manufacturer can uſe the quantity produced, he will be inclined to give a fair price for the ſame, and that alone would prevent exportation; but whilſt there is a greater quantity grown than can be worked up, the manufacturer will take advantage of the glut of a market confined to him alone, and, by lowering the price, give encouragement to the illicit trader, equally detrimental to both.

Compared with the policy of all other countries, the conduct of this kingdom is ſingular in this inſtance. Many countries produce a material from whence a manufacture ariſes; but the utmoſt reſtraints they lay upon ſuch produce, is ſome little preference for the home market,

ket, by laying ſmall duties, or other reſtraints ſimilar thereto, by which they enſure to their manufacturer the home trade, and give him ſome advantage at a foreign market: more than this is not to be deſired; nor is it the intereſt of any ſtate to prevent or obſtruct rivalſhip in trade, though it is the aim and deſire of every trader. That is a neceſſary ſpur to induſtry; and daily experience ſhews us, that manufactures may flouriſh in this kingdom, without any poſſeſſion of the raw material; nay, though they fetch the ſame from a great diſtance, at a conſiderable charge and expence, yet the ingenuity of the Engliſh workman, and the credit of the Britiſh merchant, put them, at leaſt, upon an equal footing with other traders, and enable them to find a ſale for their commodities at all markets. This, amongſt other things, ſhews plainly, that there is no neceſſity to eſtabliſh a monopoly againſt the grower, for the benefit of the manufacture; the advantage of which monopoly ariſes more from the loſs of part of our own countrymen,

men, than from that of the foreign manufacturer; and the prohibitory law, contrary to its original intent of operating againſt foreigners, has a deſtructive effect on the property of a very conſiderable body of men in this kingdom; it gives the manufacturer the opportunity of fixing the price, and the grower is compelled to take it: He only is acquainted with the real value, and enabled to allow himſelf what profit his conſcience may reconcile to him: we may hope that he reſtrains himſelf from making any advantage of his knowledge, and candidly confeſſes to the grower the real value of his wool; that he reſiſts the temptation of an exorbitant profit, without probability of detection, or poſſibility of puniſhment: yet, one muſt obſerve, that no common ſhare of honour and integrity ought to fall to the lot of men placed in this ſtate of temptation; and how peculiarly hard it is upon the grower to be left intirely at his mercy!

It has been ſaid, that the landed intereſt bears all the burdens of the ſtate; that

every tax falls upon the conſumer, and ultimately upon the land; that, when a tax is laid upon any commodity, the trader adds ſuch tax to his capital, and lays a profit thereon, which is paid by the immediate conſumer, and ultimately out of the land: when this is admitted, will it not prove the expediency of giving due encouragement to an intereſt from which ſo much is expected? Is it conſiſtent with policy, to cruſh and deſtroy that from which ſo conſiderable a return is drawn? Is it not rather expedient and wiſe to cheriſh ſo valuable an intereſt?—May one not bring to recollection, the ſtate of the nation during the laſt war? The demands of government were great, but not greater than the reſources; nor were there any complaints of the inefficiency of the taxes. Need it be ſaid, that at that time, during the whole period of a bloody and expenſive war, the country was flouriſhing, and the produce of the land found a ready market, and an adequate return. The

country

country are as willing now, as then, to contribute to the wants of the ſtate; but, alas! the preſent deficiency in the return of their wool, renders them totally unable. Wool is a commodity on which ſo many depend, ſo univerſally produced from all land in this iſland, to a greater or leſs degree, that a failure in the market for the ſame muſt bring ruin on thouſands. Let us not deceive ourſelves with the idea that the preſent fall in the price affects only one ſpecies of wool; it is general, to a degree, to all wool grown upon paſture land of any value. There is a ſort of fine wool, which is ſold at a great price now; but that is of a kind which no man wiſhes to have upon his eſtate: it is only grown on ſheep depaſtured upon poor lands, which either want better cultivation, or are incapable of improvement.

It is not impoſſible to ſuppoſe, that the exports of our woollen manufacture may yet leſſen; and this not from any fault in the manufacturer, but from an improvement or alteration in the policy

of ſome neighbouring ſtate, by which they may be impelled to employ the induſtry of their own people in thoſe goods which they now purchaſe from us; or poſſibly from the alteration of the faſhions in the dreſſes of the people in thoſe countries, as has taken place in this, and cottons ſucceed the uſe of woollens. This would not be a deſirable event, but would ſtill give no room for deſpondence: Adapt but your policy to the times; and not, by adhering to old eſtabliſhments too tenaciouſly, loſe the advantage of the preſent day. A market for the produce of land ſhould be enſured at all events, if poſſible, as ſuch muſt ever be advantageous to the ſtate. No policy can be good, that ſuffers the produce of land to rot, by reſtraining it from a market. Such an evil might bring into conſideration the comparative value to the nation of the woollen and cotton manufacture; and, if one muſt ſurvive at the expence of the other, that which is proved of leaſt value muſt give way. It is very certain,

the woollen manufacture cannot long thrive under the preſent depreſſion of the wool-grower: a temporary ſuſpenſion of the laws prohibiting the exportation of wool, might give a temporary relief to the grower, and both manufactures may poſſibly flouriſh equally for a time; and future policy may dictate ſuch laws as the exigency of the time may require.

The policy of this nation ſhould ſeem to have taken a bias, for ſome time paſt, in favour of trade, to the depreſſion of the landed intereſt; and the land ſeems to have borne various reſtraints in the articles of its produce, with an inattention, at leaſt, on the part of the owners, almoſt unaccountable; as witneſs the former laws regarding corn, and the preſent, reſpecting hides and wool. The wiſdom of the nation has ſeen the impolicy of the reſtraints laid upon corn, and, having opened their eyes thereon, have broke the ſhackles of an ill-judged prohibition: The wool-grower ſtands almoſt ſingle, in the preſent day, with regard to an abſo-

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lute prohibition from finding a market for his commodity; for, with regard to the prohibition laid upon the exportation of hides, the flouriſhing ſtate of that manufacture renders ſuch laws nugatory; ſince, added to the home produce, the manufacturers in that commodity are able to work up a conſiderable quantity imported from foreign parts. The ſame plea which the manufacturer uſes for preventing the exportation of wool, might be urged by the land owners againſt the importation of hides; which would manifeſtly raiſe the price of the home growth produced upon their land, to their immediate advantage: but their policy is different; they judge with more liberality, and are willing to give up a ſelfiſh intereſt, for the benefit of the ſtate: They wiſh to ſee the produce of their land feed and employ the induſtrious poor; but are not equally pleaſed to ſee a monopoly exerciſed againſt them, only for the purpoſe of increaſing the wealth of the individual manufacturer.

Whilſt

Whilſt the manufacturer can uſe the wool grown, it is the wiſh as well as intereſt of the land owner, that he ſhould have it; but when there is more produced than the manufacturer can uſe, then it is that the landed intereſt would be glad to have the liberty of going to a foreign market; and if their commodity ſo carried abroad, by increaſing a rivalſhip in trade, ſhould give a freſh ſpur to the induſtry of the manufacturer at home, it is apprehended that no ſmall benefit might ariſe to the ſtate thereby.

There is no particular cauſe, at preſent, for the landed intereſt to complain of the prohibitory law regarding hides; but, as it was originally founded in impolicy, being nugatory when the manufacture flouriſhes, and oppreſſive if otherwiſe, it ought to be repealed. Time may come, when the different policy of other countries, or faſhion, may have the ſame effect with regard to the leather manufacture, as they have now with reſpect to the woollen; and therefore the policy of ſuch law

had

had better be conſidered, when the reſtraints thereof do not operate to the oppreſſion of any.

Too much cannot be ſaid in praiſe of the woollen manufacture, and the benefits derived to the nation therefrom, when it is conſidered what great numbers of the poor are employed therein, and how much their induſtry contributes to the proſperity of the ſtate. How far the law made for the importation of Iriſh yarn is conſiſtent with true policy, deſerves the moſt ſerious inveſtigation. Spinning is the particular province of women and children, and when there is more than a ſufficiency of the raw material at home to employ ſuch perſons, is it policy to make uſe of the labour of others at their expence, and by ſuch means ſtarve the poor at home, and add further to the diſtreſs of the landed intereſt, upon whom this is rather an inſult, than a benefit to the manufacturer? The cheapneſs of proviſions in Ireland, ariſing in ſome meaſure from the lowneſs of the public taxes, and their manner of living, enable their

poor

poor to ſpin cheaper than our's can; ſo that the market being over ſupplied, the manufacturer treats the poor ſpinner in the ſame manner he does the wool-grower; and there are now ſome thouſands of this claſs willing, but unable from their induſtry to gain a livelihood, that article having fallen 25 per cent. within theſe few years: and thus is a laborious and valuable part of the ſociety bereft of the means of acquiring a competent ſhare of the neceſſaries of life by their induſtry.

Laws made without due reflection and judgment, frequently bring the moſt diſaſtrous conſequences: Benefits are more eaſily conferred than reſumed: Perſons in poſſeſſion of a benefit are ſeldom willing to inquire by what means they came into ſuch poſſeſſion; but are generally willing to retain it, and ſeldom part from it without conſtraint. Ireland is now emerging from a ſtate of indolence and inactivity, and may poſſibly, by degrees, ſo far improve in manufacture, as to work up its own yarn; but until that time ſhall arrive, the legiſlature of that country will have too much wiſdom, if we

may judge from the late conduct of their leaders, to lay reſtraints or prohibitions upon the induſtry of their poor, or to give up a privilege which they now enjoy; being ſenſible that the increaſe of their manufactures (whenever that ſhall happen) will operate as a reſtraint much more effectually than laws, when ſuch reſtraint ſhall be beneficial to their ſtate. How far it may be prudent, in the preſent ſtate of affairs, to curtail a privilege which Ireland has now enjoyed for ſome time, muſt be left to the diſcretion of our rulers, in whoſe judgment the landed intereſt have hitherto placed a confidence which they would not willingly withdraw; and therefore form expectations that their preſent diſtreſs will at leaſt engage attention, and that they ſhall obtain ſuch relief as their caſe may require, and the preſent exigency of affairs may admit. If it ſhould not be thought adviſeable, in the preſent ſituation of affairs, to forbid ſuch importation abſolutely, perhaps it might be put under ſome regulations for the preſent, having regard to the price of

wool under which ſuch importation ſhould be allowed. However the neceſſity of the times may require, that ſuch only ſhould be the mode adopted for the preſent, yet it is hoped that the bad policy of the meaſure will be kept in remembrance, that, when a more convenient time offers, what was formed in bad policy, and found oppreſſive in the execution, may be repealed.

To a curious obſerver, the ſtatute book diſcovers a wonderful contraſt between the perſevering ſpirit of trade, and the ſupine inattention of the landed intereſt: The former, having their own ſelfiſh and private intereſt ever in view, ſteadily purſue the ſame; whilſt the latter have ſuffered the produce of their lands, at various times, and upon different occaſions, to be laid under reſtraints and prohibitions, for the intereſt of ſome particular branches of trade, to the prejudice of the land-owner; not to the real uſe of the manufacturer (whoſe welfare ſeldom, if ever, requires ſuch prohibitions) nor to

the intereſt of the ſtate, but to the private emolument only of the wealthy individual.

The riches of individuals do not prove the riches of a ſtate: the former may be great, whilſt the latter may be wanting in reſources; as is apparent in a neighbouring ſtate, the individuals of which are among the richeſt people in Europe, whilſt the ſtate is amongſt the pooreſt: and this will ever be the caſe, when trade gains ſuch an influence in any government, that individuals can acquire riches at the expence of the policy of that ſtate.

If, from the peruſal of the foregoing conſiderations, it ſhall appear equally concluſive to the reader as it does to the writer, that the principle upon which the prohibitory laws regarding the exportation of wool are founded, no longer exiſts, and that the monopoly, which was intended for the manufacturer, is now only exiſting againſt the grower;—that there is a large quantity of long combing wool in the hands of the grower, without any

market

market for the ſame; and that, in conſequence of the want of ſuch market, the ſaid quantity is accumulating, to the great impoveriſhment of the countryman, the certain ruin of the landowner, and, in conſequence thereof, the utter inability in both to anſwer the demands of the ſtate—may it not be hoped, that what is aſked in juſtice to the landed intereſt, will not be withheld from any motives of partiality or prejudice?

As from the whole it appears, that a ſuſpenſion of the prohibitory laws, with regard to the exportation of wool, is the only means which can give an adequate relief to the preſent diſtreſs of the country, there is the greateſt reaſon to expect that the legiſlature will, in their wiſdom, adopt ſuch meaſures which promiſe relief, in the firſt inſtance, to the complainants, advantage to the ſtate, and in their conſequences real and laſting benefit to the manufacturer:—the latter is the rather inſiſted upon, in oppoſition to the contracted notions of ſome ill-

ill-judging traders, as nothing is more certain, than that, where the produce of land is expected for the ſupply of any market, either for proviſion or manufacture, it is eſſentially neceſſary to give due encouragement to the grower:—the neglect of which, as paſt experience will inform us, will enſure famine in the one caſe, and a loſs of manufacture in the other, by a failure in the ſupply of ſuch produce; it being certain, that the only way to enſure a ſufficient ſupply of any commodity, the produce of land, is to give due encouragement to the grower, by leaving him at liberty at leaſt to find a market for his produce.

I would not be thought, from any thing that has been ſaid in the foregoing ſheets, inimical to trade; fully ſenſible as I am of the advantages derived from trade and commerce, and the propriety of giving all due encouragement thereto. Land and trade are ſo blended together in this kingdom, that their intereſt is, and ought always to be, conſidered as one; nor can one thrive by

the depreſſion of the other. Land being the reſource from whence the wealth of the nation ſprings, whilſt that is flouriſhing, it cauſes ſuch a general circulation as gives life and vigour to trade and commerce, and all the operations of the ſtate; and whilſt due encouragement is given to the landed intereſt, the nation need never fear a want of reſources equal to all its demands. Nothing, therefore, is a more miſtaken policy, than for trade to expect to receive any benefit from the depreſſion of land; it is ſomething like ſtopping the head of a ſpring, which is the ſource of a great river, which, in its courſe, diffuſes wealth and affluence to the merchant and manufacturer; who are immediately intereſted in the preſervation and good ſtate of that from whence their riches ſo immediately flow.

FINIS.

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